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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS BETTER ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Sponsoring Two Innovative Delivery Models at North York General's Branson Site

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is supporting two innovative delivery models at North York General Hospital's Branson site to reduce wait times and improve access to cataract surgeries and total joint hip and knee replacements, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

"North York General is taking a leadership role in improving access to cataract, and total joint hip and knee replacement services," Smitherman said. "By fostering these collaborative working models, North York General and its partners are working to help patients receive quality services faster."

North York General's Branson site is home to a hip and knee common joint assessment centre, which has been set up in collaboration with Markham Stouffville Hospital and York Central Hospital. A specially trained team of interdisciplinary staff, working with the orthopedic surgeons, assesses and manages patients requiring primary joint assessment. This results in orthopedic surgeons spending less time in the office and more time in the operating room, which helps increase the number of cases performed and improves access for patients. The centre has the capacity to handle approximately 9,000 patient visits per year.

"Today's announcement is yet another example of innovation in health care that is producing results in North York," said Monte Kwinter, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. "This investment will help ensure reduced wait times for critical procedures in the local community."

In 2006/07, through its Wait Time Strategy, the government has provided approximately $3 million to support the establishment of the Total Joint Assessment Centre and the performance of additional hip and knee joint replacements at the Branson site.

A high volume centre for cataract surgery has also been established at North York General's Branson site. It is improving access to this surgery by integrating its staff and resources with those from Humber River Regional Hospital and Markham Stouffville Hospital into a single site. The centre helps reduce wait times through the use of dedicated operating suites designed for the care of cataract patients, training staff in a specialized environment and standardizing instruments and supplies. It also helps free up operating room space and time at the General site and the other two hospitals, so that these operating rooms can be used for other needed surgical procedures. The high volume center has the capacity to perform 5,800 surgeries per year.

The government has provided approximately $1 million to support the performance of additional cataract surgeries and the start up of the high volume centre at the Branson site.

"We're pleased to be working with neighboring hospitals in improving access to cataract surgeries and

total joint hip and knee replacements," said Bonnie Adamson, President and CEO North York General Hospital. "These two new delivery models will reduce wait times for patients, improve patient outcomes, increase efficiencies in the operating room, and coordinate the use of resources."

"This is an example of how our health care system can work seamlessly," said Janet Beed, President and CEO, Markham Stouffville Hospital. "Our collaborative efforts help ensure that patients receive access to these procedures in as timely manner as possible."

"Partnerships like the Cataract Centre and the Total Joint Assessment Centre are important models of care, focusing resources for maximum patient benefit and the efficient use of vital operating funds, said Humber River Regional Hospital President and CEO Rueben Devlin. "They not only provide high-quality care, but free up important acute care resources so hospitals like Humber River can do more cancer surgeries, more laparoscopic bariatric cases and other important surgical procedures."

"These new models of care mean that more people will get timely access to the health care they deserve," said Bruce Harber, President and CEO of York Central Hospital. "We are proud to be partnering with the McGuinty government, North York General and Markham Stouffville to provide the best health care possible."

The government of Ontario has taken a leadership role in reducing wait times in Canada by:

- Investing more than $614 million through Ontario's Wait Time Strategy since 2004 to provide nearly 740,000 additional procedures for five key areas (cancer surgery, cardiac procedures, cataract surgery, hip and knee replacements, and MRI/CT scans)
- Creating a public website that provides information on wait times in hospitals across the province
- Supporting a number of innovative and more efficient models of care delivery, such as Kensington Eye Institute, that are changing how health care is accessed in Ontario.

These initiatives are part of the McGuinty government's plan for innovation in public health care, building a system that delivers on three priorities – keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

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